

Executive Summary

In September 2009, Chancellor Marty Meehan and Provost Ahmed Abdelal established the Center for Irish Partnerships at UMass Lowell, one of six international partnership centers. The aim of these centers is to strengthen and coordinate ongoing international partnerships as well as to develop new education and research partnerships in areas of the world that pose strategically important opportunities.

Lowell is a vibrant city that has always been home to waves of immigrants, the first of whom were the Irish. The Irish played a fundamental role in the development of the new town and it is a role that they continue to play to this day.

The Center for Irish Partnership fosters collaborations and partnerships with educational institutions in Ireland and Northern Ireland across an interdisciplinary spectrum including the social sciences, the natural sciences and engineering, the humanities and health and education fields.

These international partnerships embrace faculty exchange and joint research ventures and to work with Irish partners to create a dynamic model for Cross-Atlantic collaboration that will promote and advance University of Massachusetts Lowell's goals to enhance the student experience by providing a global perspective to teaching and research, while contributing to Irish interests through exchange and service.

Since it was founded, the Center for Irish Partnerships has forged special transatlantic relationships with Irish educational partners on both sides of the border.

The Center has four co-directors, Dr. Frank Talty, Dr. Stephen McCarthy, Professor Ann Marie Hurley and Victoria Denoon.

UMass Lowell 2020

While the core mission of UMass Lowell has remained the same since the 1890s – educate, research, serve the community – the University today bears little resemblance to its early predecessor schools. In fact, the campus is very different than even five years ago, as enrollment soars, academic programs are added, buildings are constructed and a global flavor takes hold.

How does the University manage this growth? How does it respond to changing societal needs? What should the school look like in 2020?

Those questions were answered in, “UMass Lowell 2020: A Strategic Plan for the Next Decade,” developed over 18 months by more than 200 faculty, staff and students, with feedback from the entire campus as well as an external advisory group comprised of alumni and community leaders. The effort was led by Provost Ahmed Abdelal and Executive Vice Chancellor Jacqueline Moloney. The plan was reviewed and updated in October 2015 after five years to recognize accomplishments and changed priorities.

The plan articulates a vision of UMass Lowell in the year 2020 and maps out the blueprint to get there. It sets out a comprehensive strategy that will differentiate the University by its excellence across several areas.

The University is committed to benchmarking progress toward targeted these goals and has created the UMass Lowell Report Card to track and evaluate indicators vital to success. This report identifies 25 strategic indicators organized around five pillars of excellence to measure progress. Systematic analysis of the Report Card will be used to guide multi-year financial and academic program development by the Strategic Planning Commission working closely with senior administrators, faculty, staff and students of the University.

The result of these efforts? Today and tomorrow’s students will uphold the reputation of today’s alumni as being tenacious, innovative, hard-working and well-prepared individuals ready to contribute to the world’s ever-changing complex business, community and cultural challenges.

Pillars of Excellence

I. Transformational Education

Experiential and trans-disciplinary learning prepare UMass Lowell students for fulfillment and making a difference in the world.

II. Global Engagement & Inclusive Culture

Dynamic, global collaborations around the world support student and faculty exchanges, research and other entrepreneurial enterprises. These initiatives will contribute to the development of an inclusive campus culture.

III. Innovative Research & Entrepreneurship

UMass Lowell fosters innovative and creative research and scholarship that seeks sustainable solutions to the major challenges in today's world.

IV. Leverage Our Legacy and Our Place

UMass Lowell is a public enterprise committed to building on our legacy by creating partnerships, locally, regional, nationally and internationally that enrich and sustain the human experience.

V. Entrepreneurial Stewardship in Higher Education

An entrepreneurial approach to stewardship of human, physical and financial resources will be the hallmark of UMass Lowell's approach to building a healthy and sustainable future.

Center for Irish Partnerships Strategic Priorities

1. Institutional partnerships

Queen's University, Belfast, Northern Ireland

In March 2009, University of Massachusetts Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan signed a Collaboration Agreement with Queen's University Belfast (Queens) in a ceremony with Queen's Vice Chancellor Peter Gregson's in the Great Hall at the Queen's campus in Belfast.

Queen's is a research-driven university with a dynamic world class research and education portfolio and strong international connections. Areas of research excellence range from conflict resolution and peace studies to drug design and health care. Its Sonic Arts program and its cutting edge studies in nano science place it among the leaders in the United Kingdom and the European community.

Queen's University of Belfast has established a multi-disciplinary Polymer Processing Research Centre (PPRC) with assistance from the Industrial Research and Technology Unit (IRTU) in Northern Ireland as well as The Medical Polymers Research Institute (MPRI).

Queen's has a world renowned School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy, led by the distinguished expert in Irish Studies, Professor Richard English. The school is also home to the International Research Initiative, one goal of which is Irish Studies research. In addition, Queen's conducts an annual International Summer School that offers a three week program in Irish history, politics, religion, literature and the arts.

The City of Belfast presents a unique opportunity for UMass Lowell students to study in the community issues of social conflict and resolution.

St. Mary's University College, Belfast, Northern Ireland

St. Mary's university, which is affiliated with Queen's, also offers coursework in Liberal Arts, Education, Irish and European studies and promotes internships in the Belfast community. Chancellor Meehan and a delegation from the University of Massachusetts Lowell were hosted by St. Mary's Principal Peter Finn and Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams at the Falls Road campus in March of 2009.

St. Mary's is consistently ranked among the top colleges in the UK in student satisfaction. It offers programs in liberal arts and teacher training.

Neighboring community organizations in West Belfast such as the Gaitacht Quarter Board and the Commission for Victims and Survivors may provide UMass Lowell students with opportunities for internships and community service.

Dublin City University

In July, 2010, University of Massachusetts Lowell Chancellor Marty Meehan and a delegation from UMass Lowell attended the inauguration of President Brian MacCraith at the Dublin City University campus in Ireland. President's MacCraith's first event as President was to sign a Collaboration Agreement with UMass Lowell to promote collaboration between the two institutions.

Dublin City University was established in 1989. There are over 80 programmes and 11,000 registered students. Dublin City University was initially set up to fulfil the national requirement for a highly-trained workforce with skills in the areas of business, science and electronics, computer technology, communications and languages and as an agent for change in its local community. The first students came through the door in 1980 and the university is now recognised nationally and internationally as a centre of academic excellence.

University of Ulster

2. Research Collaborations

US/Ireland Emerging Technologies Conferences

The U.S./Ireland Emerging Technologies Conference

On October 19 and 20, 2009, the University of Massachusetts Lowell hosted the first U.S./Ireland Emerging Technologies Conference. It was held at the University of Massachusetts Inn and Conference Center. This exciting joint conference was host to Professors from Queens University in Belfast, North Ireland; Dublin City University Ireland and the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

Second U.S. / Ireland Emerging Technologies Conference 2011 – “The University and Economic Recovery: The Role of Technology, Enterprise and Learning Approaches”

The conference on “The University and Economic Recovery: The Role of Technology, Enterprise and Learning Approaches” took place on October 25-26th in the Helix at Dublin City University. The conference focused on highlighting ways whereby Universities in conjunction with industry, funding bodies and through collaborations, can aid economic recovery. The conference invited speakers from Science Foundation Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Engineers Ireland, the HEA, IBEC, and the President of DCU, Prof. Brian MacCraith.

There was also a conjoint meeting between DCU, the University of Massachusetts Lowell and Queen's University and which was designed to enhance collaboration and research between all three institutions. The conference addressed ways whereby the Universities can address economic recovery by exploiting their expertise in collaborative activities **FOCUSING ON TEACHING AND LEARNING, RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY**. In the latter case the focus is on nanotechnology, diagnostics, medical devices and the associated technologies. All these areas are high priorities for the three Universities and further joint initiatives and activities will be developed based on these and associated areas.

The 3rd U S/Ireland Emerging Technologies Conference

The conference on Advanced Polymers and Teaching and Learning took place September 24 - 26th at Queen's University Belfast. Chancellor Meehan provided remarks at conference opening and Gala Dinner. Dr. Frank Talty gave a lecture on the U.S. Election at Queen's and interviews on BBC Radio Ulster and UTV. Faculty from UMass Lowell presenting at the conference included – Dr. Stephen McCarthy, Dr. Steve Tello, Dr. Susan Brauhn, Dr. Carol Barry and Dr. Joey Mead.

Irish in Massachusetts Conference

The Irish in Massachusetts: Historical Significance, Lasting Legacy was held on Wednesday, Sept. 24 to Friday, Sept. 26, 2014 at the UMass Lowell Inn & Conference Center, 50 Warren St., Lowell, MA 01852.

This conference, presented in partnership by UMass Lowell and Queen's University Belfast, was an interdisciplinary look at the understudied nature of the Irish Diaspora in New England, with specific focus on the Irish and their contributions to Massachusetts.

With 24 percent of the Massachusetts population being identified as being of Irish ancestry in the 2000 and 2010 censuses, there is significant interest in the state. Despite the demographics, there is no detailed historical study of the Irish experience in Massachusetts, such as that achieved for other centers of Irish settlement in the United States.

3. Faculty experiences

Jim Nehring, Paula Rayman, Karen Melillo, Jonathan Silverman, Alex Ruthman, Steve McCarthy

Faculty Exchange and Collaboration

Faculty Exchange Excellence and Equity in Education: Research Collaboration between Lowell, Belfast and Haifa completed a research proposal that will identify evidence based practices for school improvement and design intervention strategies to assist communities in improving their schools. The Belfast-Haifa-Lowell Group also completed a research proposal it intends to use to apply for grants from external funders.

Several faculty members have been asked to give lectures at various institutions in Ireland including, National University of Ireland at Galway, Queen's University, Dublin City University and St. Patrick's Drumcondra.

We have hosted faculty from Queen's University, Dublin City University and Cork Institute of Technology on campus for lectures and workshops, including:

1. Dr. Gary Murphy, faculty member from Dublin City University and Fulbright Scholar, came to campus to deliver a lecture on "Ireland: From Celtic Tiger to IMF Bailout".

2. Dr. Shane O'Neill, Dean of College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences from Queen's University visited campus to meet with faculty and students in Peace and Conflict Studies.
3. Dr. Jean Hughes and Morag Munro from Dublin City University spent two days on campus meeting with various individuals about online learning, Centers for Learning and Innovation in learning.
4. Dr. Tony Gallagher, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, from Queen's University, visited campus to take part in a Peace and Education Forum "Facing Conflict: Voices from the Field."
5. Michael Delaney, Vice President of Development from Cork Institute of Technology came to campus to explore collaboration opportunities.
6. Dr. Karen Devereaux Melillo spent a portion of her Sabbatical at Dublin City University from February 26 - March 14, 2013. Read her report on the trip.

4. Student Experiences

Student Testimonials

"This was an experience out of this world...or at least out of the country. Having the opportunity to experience archaeology with amazing and highly entertaining professionals, and learning what really lies in the ground beneath our feet really opened my eyes up to looking at the world in a different way. Seeing how the dig connected a story from Lowell to Northern Ireland showed me how amazing the discovery of history is, and how the smallest item is significant. As an engineering student, this was an adventure outside of my daily routine, and it was an experience full of wonderful people, learning, and traveling that I would not trade for anything else."

-Marcelle Durrenberger, Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program participant 2012

"This is one of the best experiences of my college career, participating in the Irish-American Archeological gave me real-world experience along with seeing history at my fingertips"

-Katherine Henckler, Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program participant 2012

It was an absolutely amazing experience. It was two weeks I know I'll never forget and I would love to have the chance to do it all over again. Not only because the archaeological dig was so fascinating to me, but the people that we interacted with along the way were some of the nicest people I've ever met, and even though we were only with them for a total of 2 weeks during this experience, they've made a big impact on me

nonetheless. The memories I've made with professionals in the field and the things I've learned while digging in the dirt are things that will stick with me forever.

-Ami Krawczyk, Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program participant 2012

"I signed up for the International Summer School at Queen's because coming from Irish decent I never really knew or understood all the troubles that took place over there, and wanted a clearer understanding of it all. When asked what my favorite memory was, I would have to say that every single second I spent there was my favorite memory. I had the best experience of my life with what started out as complete strangers but some to this day are some of my best friends and they are from California, Texas, Oregon, etc., and I still talk to and see them whenever I can. We all meet up in New York City twice since we have been back in America. Also the Irish are the nicest and kindest people on this planet, they made me feel at home there in every way, and they went out of their way to please everyone in the group. In short, it was the greatest experience of my life."

- Mark Bresnihan, '11, Criminal Justice, Lexington, Mass.

*"I enrolled in a class called, "Problems of Modern Ireland" with Dr. Lipchitz, and I loved it! After that, I wanted to learn more about the history of Ireland and Northern Ireland and this program seemed like the best way to do that. The faculty at the Irish Studies Institute were excellent. The seminars were fantastic, the field trips outstanding! I loved everything about it: the accommodations, the city, the activities, meeting new friends, etc. It was an unforgettable academic experience! I highly recommend it! I'm so glad I was able to take part in the university's first group going!" *

- Maria Millett, '10, History major and Latin American Studies minor, Bradford, Mass.

5. Community engagement

An integral part of the Center for Irish Partnerships is to plan a wide range of activities to shed light on the major issues in Ireland. The Center will work to advance knowledge of the relationship between economic development and research efforts. The Center will host guest speaker series, seminars, joint conferences and cultural events as well as dissemination of relevant research reports, media resources and special lectures.

Key Highlights

Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program:

The Irish-American Heritage Archaeological Program was established following the signing of an international partnership agreement between UMass Lowell and Queen's University Belfast in March 2009. The objective is to enable students to gain a deeper understanding of the life of the Irish in Ireland before and after the Great Famine, and the role played by the Irish in the development of America during the 19th century.

In 1822 a group of 30 Irish labourers led by Hugh Cummiskey arrived in the new industrial town of Lowell to assist with the excavation of the Pawtucket and Merrimack canals. By 1831 their numbers had swelled to over 400 and Kirk Boott, mill manager, had donated a plot of company land for a Catholic church – St. Patrick's Church. This event marked the permanent settlement of the Irish in the town, with the area around the church becoming known as the "Irish Acre," the "Paddy Camps" or "New Dublin".

The old church was constructed in what had been a shanty town, but the area was landscaped and changed when the old timber church was replaced in 1854 with a neo-Gothic stone church. From cartographic and pictorial evidence it would seem, however, that the area to the front of the church has remained unchanged since that time and remains in lawn. As such, it was decided that an archaeological excavation would be undertaken on the front lawn at St. Patrick's Church to see what – if anything – might survive.

Business Leaders and Local Government Collaboration

In November 2010, The Center for Irish Partnerships hosted a visit to UMass Lowell by delegation from Donegal, Ireland, including Mayor Cora Harvey and members of the County Council.

In October 2011, The Center for Irish Partnerships hosted The Northern Ireland Massachusetts Connection (NIMAC), a group dedicated to advancing business, research and clinical collaboration, between Massachusetts, Northern Ireland and Europe, on campus in the M2D2 facility.

In November 2011, The Center for Irish Partnerships hosted Breakfast Roundtable for a delegation of local authority and business leaders from the Northwest of Ireland on the Green Economy and Tourism.

Meetings and Events with Irish Government Leaders

On November 19, 2010, Ireland's Ambassador to the United States of American, His Excellency Michael Collins visited UMass Lowell with Irish Consul General to Boston, Michael Lonergan,

to hear about the various partnership activities UMass Lowell is engaged in with Irish Universities.

In February 2012, the Center for Irish Partnerships directors attended a reception at the Seaport Hotel for Taoiseach Enda Kenny, T.D.

In March 2012, Ireland's Minister for Children and Youth Affairs visited UMass Lowell for a roundtable discussion on Children's Rights with faculty members Linda Williams and Andy Harris from Criminal Justice and Stephanie Block from Psychology.

In May 2012, Co-Director Frank Talty attended a luncheon at the UMass Club welcoming Irish President, Michael D. Higgins, to Boston. Co-Directors Steve McCarthy and Victoria Denoon subsequently attended a lecture at Faneuil Hall by President Michael D. Higgins, regarding the Famine.